

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L MUSCAT 001008

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA, NEA/ARP, EB, AND H  
STATE PASS USTR FOR J. BUNTIN AND S. DONNELLY  
NSC FOR E. ABRAMS, N. RAMCHAND AND R. HUNTER  
USDOC FOR ITA (C. OBERG)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/21/2016

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ELAB](#) [ETRD](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: OMANI FRUSTRATION WITH THE FTA: WE UNDERSTAND BUT  
WE CAN'T EXPLAIN

REF: A. MUSCAT 954

[1](#)B. MUSCAT 852

Classified By: Ambassador Gary A. Grappo. Reason: 1.4 (b and d)

[1](#)1. (C) In a June 21 meeting with the Ambassador, the Sultan's Advisor for External Liaison, Dr. Omar Zawawi, conveyed Oman's growing frustration with and disappointment over the slow progress of the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement in the U.S. Congress. Zawawi confirmed that other Omani officials, including Minister of Commerce and Industry Maqbool Sultan and Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs Yusef bin Alawi, had also communicated to him their frustrations over the slow pace of the FTA.

[1](#)2. (C) Zawawi said that he was told in meetings he had with USG officials and others during his visit to Washington last month that the delay had "nothing to do with Oman" or the FTA, and stemmed more from "domestic political concerns" during an election year. "We understand this but cannot explain why we have now become the victim of insults and slanderous insinuation after so many years of U.S.-Oman friendship." Oman's reputation is suffering because of the delay, he said. He cited recent examples, including a recent Jerusalem Post article wrongly alleging Oman's adherence to the Arab boycott of Israel and claims by Members of Congress of labor abuses and "slave labor" in Oman. He asserted Oman has become the target of "anyone with the slightest grudge" against Oman or opposed to better U.S.-Arab relations, as well as slanderous journalism. "This humiliation is very difficult for us to accept," he said.

[1](#)3. (C) The Ambassador asked whether the Sultan is aware of this and shares this frustration. The Sultan's long-time close advisor responded that Sultan Qaboos is "aware of everything" that has occurred but, nevertheless, remains fully committed to the FTA with the U.S. The Sultan, he said, is an astute political reader and has "his own special sources" of information, an oblique reference to the Sultan's known penchant for following the internet. Therefore, he doubtlessly understands the situation in the U.S. at the moment. However, added Zawawi, "no one wants to discuss it with him." Concluding the discussion, Zawawi implored the Ambassador to urge Washington to "move this forward now and spare us this embarrassment."

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: Dr. Zawawi, whose family's close relationship with the Sultan's family dates back to the late nineteenth century, is one of three or four Omanis with complete and unrestricted access to the Sultan. There is no question that the Sultan is not only informed of the facts but also of his ministers' growing frustration with the progress of an initiative he had unreservedly backed from the beginning. While the doctor hesitated to say that the Sultan himself may share the feelings of these ministers and others, the frankness of his exchange with the Ambassador suggests that the Sultan has similar concerns, especially when it comes to embarrassment of the country.  
GRAPPO